
**FOOD STAMP CERTIFICATION
CLAIMS
Requirements for Establishing Recipient Claims**

**FS 805 Requirements for Establishing Recipient Claims
Change #4-2006
August 1, 2006**

805.01 GENERAL POLICY

All adult (age 18 and over) household members and any emancipated minor head of household are jointly and separately liable for the value of any overissued benefits. Household members include persons living in the household that were or should have been included in the food stamp budget at the time of the overissuance.

- A. Establish a recipient claim against a household that received more food stamp benefits than it was entitled to receive.
- B. In most situations, all adult household members who were in the household at the time of the overissuance are considered debtors for the claim. A head of household under the age of 18 is also considered a debtor on a claim. See 805.03 for exceptions and information on changes in household composition, authorized representatives, etc.
- C. Do not establish a claim against Semi-Annual Reporting or SNAP households for non-reportable changes. Semi-Annual Reporting, Transitional Food Stamp, and SNAP cases have limited reporting requirements. Refer to sections 450, 550, or 600.

805.02 TYPES OF CLAIMS

There are three types of recipient claims.

- A. Administrative Error (AE) - agency action or inaction. This includes state agency errors.
- B. Inadvertent Household Error (IHE) - the household's misunderstanding or unintentional error.
- C. Intentional Program Violation (IPV) - the household has:
 - 1. Intentionally failed to report or,
 - 2. Misrepresented the household's situation or,
 - 3. Intentionally misused benefits.

See Section 825.03 for methods to establish an IPV.

805.03 SITUATIONS WHEN A RECIPIENT CLAIM IS NOT ESTABLISHED

- A. Neither an Agency Error (AE) claim nor an Inadvertent Household Error (IHE) claim is established solely based on the fact that the county failed to insure that certain procedural requirements were met. These requirements include:
 - 1. The household failed to sign the application. Do not establish a claim solely because the application is not signed, providing benefits are correct. However, the county is not prohibited from establishing a claim because the application is not signed. Criminal prosecution may be precluded but administrative action is not.

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2. The household did not live in the county where certified (provided there was no dual participation).
 3. The claim amount is less than \$125.00 for a non-participating household. Unless the referral is due to a QC review, the result of trafficking, or the county has a state approved claims management plan for less than \$125.00.
- B. e Funds system errors.
- C. The agency failed to timely send the Notice of Adverse Action for failure to comply with Employment and Training (E&T).
- D. Benefits were continued because of a fair hearing to appeal an E&T, voluntary quit, or Workfare non-compliance. A claim is not appropriate because the proposed disqualification is for a future period.
- E. The food stamp allotment is based on anticipated income and deductions. If the "anticipation" is incorrect, there is no overissuance if all eligibility factors were correctly considered and the allotment was computed correctly.
- F. For jointly processed applications (SSI and food stamps) taken by the Social Security Office and approved for SSI, do not establish a claim for any information reported to SSA at application or at any time during the initial 12 months certification period.
- G. For jointly processed applications (SSI and food stamps) taken by the SSA and denied for SSI, do not establish a claim for any information reported to SSA at application or at any time during the initial certification period.
- H. Changes in household circumstances which occurred during the certification period which the household is not required to report, such as changes in real property, medical expenses during the certification period, dropping out of school, etc. See Sections 400 through 550.
- I. Neither the agency nor the FSU are responsible for overissuances that occur during the period of Transitional Food Stamp (TFS) benefits that result from errors in the Work First (WFFA) check or the Food Stamp allotment determination prior to TFS. However a claim must be established for any overissuances received in the months prior to Transitional Food Stamp (TFS) benefit period. A claim must be established against a household that received dual benefits during the TFS period.
- EXAMPLE:** A FSU reports new earned income in June 2003. The change results in ineligibility for the Work First Family Assistance effective July 2003, and the Food Stamp case is transferred to TFS effective July 2003 for the months of July 2003 through November 2003. In August, 2003, the agency becomes aware that the FSU had failed to report receiving direct child support since March 2002. A claim cannot be established for the months of July 2003 and August 2003, and the allotment cannot be changed for the remaining months of the Transitional Food Stamp(TFS) benefit period. Establish a claim for the overissued months prior to July 2003.
- J. Do not establish a claim against a Semi-Annual Reporting or SNAP Household for moving out of state. A SR or SNAP Household that receives dual benefits in NC and another state made a false statement at the second application regarding their receipt of benefits from the first state. The state in which the false statement was made establishes a claim. The other state involved establishes a claim if the state in which the false statement was made declines.

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805.04 RECIPIENT CLAIMS FOR HOUSEHOLDS WITH SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- A. Sponsored Aliens
1. The sponsor of an alien and the alien are jointly liable for any overissuance of benefits as a result of incorrect information provided by the sponsor. However, if the alien's sponsor had good cause or was not at fault for supplying the incorrect information, the alien's household is solely liable for repayment of the overissuance.
 2. Determinations of good cause are made on a case-by-case basis by the Food Assistance and Energy Program Branch of the Division of Social Services. Request a determination of good cause by letter or fax, giving a summary of the details provided by the alien or sponsor.
 3. If the sponsor did not have good cause, hold both the sponsor and the alien's household jointly responsible for claims established within three years after the alien's entry into the United States. If an overissuance occurs three years after the alien's entry into the United States, hold the alien solely responsible.
 4. Procedures for determining IPV, IHE, or AE and collection action are the same as for any other household.
- B. Changes in Household Composition
1. Establish and/or initiate collection action against the household that received the overissuance.
 2. If the household composition has changed, establish and initiate collection action against anyone who was an adult household member at the time the overissuance occurred.
 3. Do not list an individual as a debtor if:
 - a. The overissuance occurred after an adult household member left the home; and
 - b. Leaving the home was not a reportable change.

EXAMPLE: Client and spouse are living together and the spouse leaves the home on January 2nd. This is a non-reportable change for SR cases and the spouse remains on the case. On January 10, the client starts a new job and the gross income places the household over the gross income limit. This is a reportable change and the client fails to report this change. Establish a claim, but do not consider the spouse a debtor since he was not living in the home at the time of the overissuance.

- C. Categorically Eligible Households
1. Establish a claim if the household fails to provide correct or complete information at application or recertification. Also establish a claim if a household does not report a change that is reportable for its category.
 2. Establish a claim if the household was receiving food stamps solely because of categorical eligibility and the household was subsequently determined ineligible for Work First or SSI except TFS.

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3. Do not establish a claim due to resources exceeding the food stamp limits, unless the household was subsequently found ineligible by Work First or Social Security Administration.
4. Prior to June 1, 2001, if a non-public assistance member moved into a categorically eligible household, the household lost its categorically eligible status for each month the member was in the household. Effective June 1, 2001, the definition of categorical eligibility was expanded to include food stamp households in which at least one member is authorized to receive Work First cash assistance, Benefit Diversion, or Work First Employment services.

D. Authorized Representatives

The household and authorized representative are equally liable for any erroneous issuance as a result of incorrect or incomplete information provided by the authorized representative, except when benefits are trafficked or misused by the authorized representative without the FSU's knowledge. The authorized representative is responsible for an erroneous issuance occurring when he is the representative for an alcoholic/drug treatment center, or when he is found guilty of trafficking EBT benefits.

E. Transitional Food Stamp Households

1. The household is liable for any overissuance that occurred prior to the Transitional Food Stamp (TFS) benefit period. Neither the agency nor the FSU are responsible for overissuances that occur during the period of Transitional Food Stamp (TFS) benefits that occurred as a result of errors in the Work First Family (WFFA) check or the Food Stamp allotment received prior to TFS.
2. Establish a claim for the Transitional Food Stamp household if the FSU fails to report moving to another State and applying for and receiving benefits in another State.
3. Establish a claim for the Transitional Food Stamp household if the agency fails to remove a member of a Transitional Food Stamp (TFS) case when it is reported that the individual has been added to another FSU in North Carolina in the same county or another county.
4. Establish a claim for the Transitional Food Stamp household if the agency fails to remove a member of a Transitional Food Stamp (TFS) case when it is reported that the individual is receiving Food Stamps in another state.
5. Establish an Agency Error Claim for the Transitional Food Stamp household when a member disqualified for an Intentional Program Violation is not removed from the budget.

F. Voluntary Quit Penalties

An individual required to report and subject to the penalty for voluntary quit is disqualified:

1. For the first violation, until the household member complies or for one month, whichever is later.
2. For the second violation, until the household member complies or for three months, whichever is later.
3. For the third or subsequent violation, until the household member complies or six months, whichever is later.

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It may be necessary to establish a claim for an individual who fails to report a voluntary quit timely which would have made the individual disqualified for one of the above time periods, unless the penalty can still be imposed timely.

G. Transfer Of Reserve Penalties

If the household fails to report or the agency fails to act on information that would have resulted in disqualification, the household is ineligible for the appropriate number of months only if this was a reportable change.

H. Households With Ineligible Individuals

Establish a claim when a household containing an ineligible member fails to report a change in situation that makes the member eligible to be included and their income and resources counted only if a reportable change. Ineligible members include an ineligible student, ineligible Able-bodied Adult Without Dependent (ABAWD), fleeing felon, and a probation/parole violator.

I. Households With Disqualified Individuals

Establish a claim when a household containing a disqualified member fails to report a change in income or reserve only if a reportable change. Disqualified individuals include those disqualified for IPV, work penalties, enumeration, a drug felony, or for failure to meet citizenship requirements.

J. Households With Fleeing Felons

If an individual had an outstanding felony warrant and had knowledge of this warrant, establish a claim if the household did not report that the household member was a fleeing felon only if a reportable change. Once the individual has knowledge of the felony warrant, either by receiving the warrant or being notified of its existence, the individual will be considered fleeing. Verification may be obtained through local law enforcement or Clerk of Court.

805.05 **DETERMINING THE CLAIM TYPE**

A. Administrative Error (AE) Claims - An Administrative Error claim may result from, but is not limited to, any of the following:

1. Failure to take action on a reportable change reported by a household to Work First Family Assistance or Food Assistance.
2. Failure to take action on information known to the agency from any of the following sources:
 - a. Work First Family Assistance (WFFA). For SR cases, this only applies to changes in the WFFA payment;
 - b. Income and Eligibility Verification System (IEVS) Data (See Section 810.02B.4. Special Requirements for IEVS Data);
 - c. IV-D Payment Reports (ACTS) as verified at application or recertification, and

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NOTE: Information known to Medicaid, services or day care assistance is **not** considered known to food stamps. If the Food Stamp caseworker is also the Medicaid caseworker, information known to Medicaid would be considered known to Food Stamps.

3. Incorrect computation of income or deductions.
 4. Incorrect keying of the DSS-8590, Client Record, data.
 5. Issuing duplicate EBT benefits.
 6. Allowing dual participation by a FSU household or household member by:
 - a. Failing to check for participation in another household, another county, or another state for the same month.
 - b. Failing to remove a member of a Transitional Food Stamp (TFS) case when it is reported that the individual has been added to another FSU in North Carolina.
 - c. Failing to remove a member of a TFS case when it is reported that the individual has applied for Food Stamp benefits in another state.
 7. Failure to timely disqualify a household member found guilty of an IPV.
 8. Failure to act on a Disqualified Recipient System (DRS) match.
 9. Overissuances identified through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) audit findings.
 10. Overissuances identified through Quality Control (QC) referrals.
 11. State Agency errors.
 12. Failure to act on changes reported to the DSS office during the initial certification period of jointly processed applications taken at the Social Security Office (for SSI and food stamps.)
 13. Failure to exclude an ineligible member or failure to disqualify a disqualified member. Examples are a drug felon, E & T disqualification, etc.
 14. Failure to include a disqualified member's income and/or resources.
 15. Do not establish a claim for a Transitional Food Stamps period unless dual benefits were received or an IPV disqualification was not enforced.
 16. The household was receiving food stamps solely because of categorical eligibility and the household was subsequently determined to be ineligible for WFFA and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
- B.** Inadvertent Household Error (IHE) – A recipient claim may result from, but is not limited to, any of the following situations. Change the claim to IPV if intent to misrepresent is established and proven by ADH, Waiver of ADH, or criminal court action.
1. Failure to provide correct or complete information at the time of application or recertification.

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2. Failure to report a change in circumstances required by Sections 400 through 550.
3. Receipt of continued benefits during a hearing process when the hearing officer affirms the reduction or termination of benefits. See exceptions in Section 805.03, D.
4. Overissuances identified through USDA audit findings.
5. Overissuances identified through QC referrals.
6. Failure to report that a member may be ineligible or disqualified.
7. Failure to report income or resources of an excluded or disqualified member.
8. The FSU failed to report moving to another state and applying for and receiving benefits from another state. This applies to Standard and Simplified cases.
9. The household was receiving food stamps solely because of categorical eligibility and the household was subsequently determined ineligible for SSI and/or WFFA due to unreported income.
10. The Social Security Administration (SSA) took an action or failed to take the appropriate action which resulted in the household improperly receiving SSI due to unreported income.

C. Intentional Program Violation (IPV) – Do not pursue an IPV when information is known to the agency in another eligibility program. An IPV exists when there is clear and convincing evidence that the individual is guilty of knowingly, willfully, and with deceitful intent of committing any of the actions listed below:

1. Make a verbal or written false statement in order to obtain benefits for which the FSU is not eligible.
2. Hide information in order to obtain benefits for which the FSU is not eligible.
3. Use an EBT card to receive:
 - a. Cash;
 - b. Alcoholic beverages;
 - c. Tobacco products;
 - d. Illegal drugs;
 - e. Firearms;
 - f. Ammunition;
 - g. Explosives; or
 - h. the purchase of any non-food items.

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4. Trade or sell food stamp EBT benefits
5. Misuse of an EBT card, such as:
- a. Use of an EBT card to pay on a credit/charge account regardless of the items that were charged; or
 - b. Allowing a non FSU member to use an EBT card to buy groceries for themselves.
 - c. Use EBT benefits to purchase food that will not be consumed by the authorized intended FSU.

EXAMPLE: An individual uses food stamp benefits to purchase food that is then sold for cash to another individual.

6. Trafficking food stamp benefits. Trafficking is defined as buying or selling EBT cards or food stamp benefits for cash or consideration other than eligible food. A claim can be established whether or not the retailer is involved. Establish the claim for the amount that was actually trafficked.

EXAMPLE: An individual sells his EBT card to another individual. The card contained \$75.00 worth of benefits and was sold for \$50.00. The claim amount is \$75.00. These claims can be difficult to establish without proper documentation, witnesses, etc.

NOTE: The FSU must have been counseled regarding the proper use of the EBT card.

7. IPV claims must be established using one of the following methods:
- a. Administrative Disqualification Hearing (ADH);
 - b. Claimant's Waiver of the ADH;
 - c. Court Action.
- Court action includes:
- (1) Deferred Prosecution when it includes a Disqualification Consent Agreement handled by the District Attorney's Office;
 - (2) Superior Court Conviction;
 - (3) District Court Conviction.
8. The overissuance may be handled as an IHE, or entered in EPICS as a claim type "U" (Undetermined Pending ADH) or "P" (Undetermined Pending Criminal Court) until guilt is established through one of the methods listed in 805.05C,9. Reclassify the claim as an IPV once guilt is established. Reclassify the claim as AE or IHE if IPV is not established. The 180 day time limit is met if a "U" or "P" is entered in EPICS before the 180th day.

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805.06 METHODS OF COLLECTING CLAIMS

There are six methods of collecting claims.

- A. Lump-sum Payments
- B. Cash Installments (Repayment Agreement, Civil Court, Confession of Judgement, etc.)
- C. Food Stamps/Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT)
- D. Allotment Reductions
- E. Treasury Offset - See Section 845, Treasury Offset Program, and Section 850, N.C. Debt Set-Off Collection (Tax Intercept) Procedures.
- F. Wage Garnishment
 - 1. Private Employers (IPV Only)
 - 2. Article 60 (State Employees Only)
 - 3. Hatch Act (Military Personnel Only)